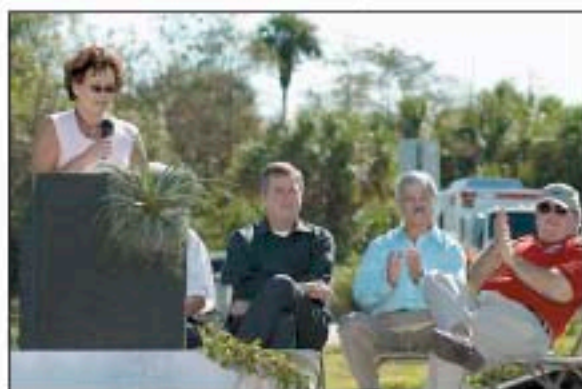


continued from front

replenish valuable water supplies and restore habitat for wildlife. The first phase will be complete by October 2005.



Governing Board Member and Big Cypress Basin Board Ex-Officio Chair Trudi Williams addresses the audience while (seated left to right) Gov. Jeb Bush, Sen. Burt Saunders and District Executive Director Henry Dean get ready to break ground to commence the first Everglades restoration construction project.

## TEAMWORK PAYS OFF

The historic groundbreaking could not have happened without the shoulder-to-shoulder teamwork with the state's federal partners, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Department of the Interior, which contributed more than \$38 million to land acquisition.

"Today is truly a great day, the first of many to come in the near future as we deliver projects as opposed to plans to restore the Everglades," said Col. Robert M. Carpenter, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Jacksonville District, under a picture-perfect sky.

Deputy Secretary of the Interior Steve Griles applauded the state for accelerating the project. "By moving forward quickly, Florida has again demonstrated its strong commitment to lasting, on-the-ground restoration of the Everglades," Griles said. "The project is an excellent example of the kind of federal-state collaboration and partnership needed to restore the South Florida ecosystem."

The South Florida Water Management District echoes the importance of partnerships in Everglades restoration, which are stronger than ever.

"It takes all levels of government, and all manner of public and stakeholder groups, working together to accomplish our restoration goals," said South Florida Water Management District Governing Board Chair Nicolás Gutiérrez.

## EXPEDITING THE PROCESS

The District's primary role has been to help expedite the development of the overall Project Implementation Report (planning document for state and federal authorization) process, along with facilitating other local, state and federal agency review and approval. In addition, the District has been the lead on developing and implementing hydrologic

models, working closely with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to support its land acquisition activities, and overseeing the cultural resources and threatened and endangered species assessments.

Other key local partners in this success story include the members of the Big Cypress Basin Board and the Collier County Commission.

"Teamwork and partnerships. That's the best way to fulfill our stewardship obligations and meet our restoration goals for both the environment and people," said Trudi Williams, ex-officio chair of the Big Cypress Basin Board and a South Florida Water Management District Governing Board member.

## LONGTIME COMMUNITY CONCERN

Southern Golden Gate Estates has been a community concern since 1975 when the Collier County Commission initiated the first study of how to reverse the impact of development activities on the natural landscape.

The Big Cypress Basin has actively supported this project from its conception and was a key partner in getting the project added to the state's Conservation and Recreation Lands program. Since 1990, the Basin, with the District, has helped fund staff positions focused exclusively on acquiring the land needed to move forward with restoration. Through multi-year appropriations, the state has contributed \$85 million to land acquisitions and \$12 million toward construction.

The Big Cypress Basin Board developed a conceptual plan and worked with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers when the project was initially identified as a federal Critical Restoration Project and continued that partnership when the project officially became part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan.

Prior to the groundbreaking, the Big Cypress Basin Board, Collier County Commission and Florida Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund entered into a memorandum of understanding to turn over the roads in Southern Golden Gate Estates to the District and the state, clearing the way for the restoration.

## UNWAVERING COMMITMENT

"Thanks to the unwavering commitment of Governor Bush, Florida is accelerating restoration of the River of Grass," said DEP Secretary David B. Struhs before joining Governor Bush, State Senator Burt Saunders, Commissioner of Agriculture Charles Bronson and other officials to ceremoniously break ground with gold-painted shovels. "Within the last month (October), Florida began operating the largest wetland in the world to improve water quality in the Everglades, donated hundreds of acres of land to complete the expansion of Everglades National Park and began restoring a more natural flow of water to the 'River of Grass' – all ahead of schedule."

For the Everglades and for the people of Florida, that is truly golden.

For more information about the Southern Golden Gate Estates Hydrologic Restoration Project and the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, visit [www.evergladesplan.org](http://www.evergladesplan.org) or call (561) 682-2088.

## Where the wild things are!

The Southern Golden Gate Estates property is adjacent to the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve, 10,000 Islands National Wildlife Refuge and Collier Seminole State Park – all protected habitats and home to many wild and wonderful Everglades plants and animals. The Southern Golden Gate Estates Hydrologic Restoration Project will provide contiguous habitat for these areas, which are home to endangered species such as the Florida panther, Florida black bear and wood stork, as well as rare tropical hammocks and plant species including orchids and bromeliads.

## Partners make it happen

The Southern Golden Gate Estates Hydrologic Restoration Project, a component of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, is an excellent example of how all levels of government are committed to the common goal of restoring America's Everglades. These partners, making it happen right now, include:

- U.S. CONGRESS
- U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
- U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
- FLORIDA LEGISLATURE
- FLORIDA GOVERNOR'S OFFICE
- FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES (DIVISION OF FORESTRY)
- FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
- SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
- BIG CYPRESS BASIN
- COLLIER COUNTY
- MICCOSUKEE TRIBE OF INDIANS OF FLORIDA
- SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA
- OTHER LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

